

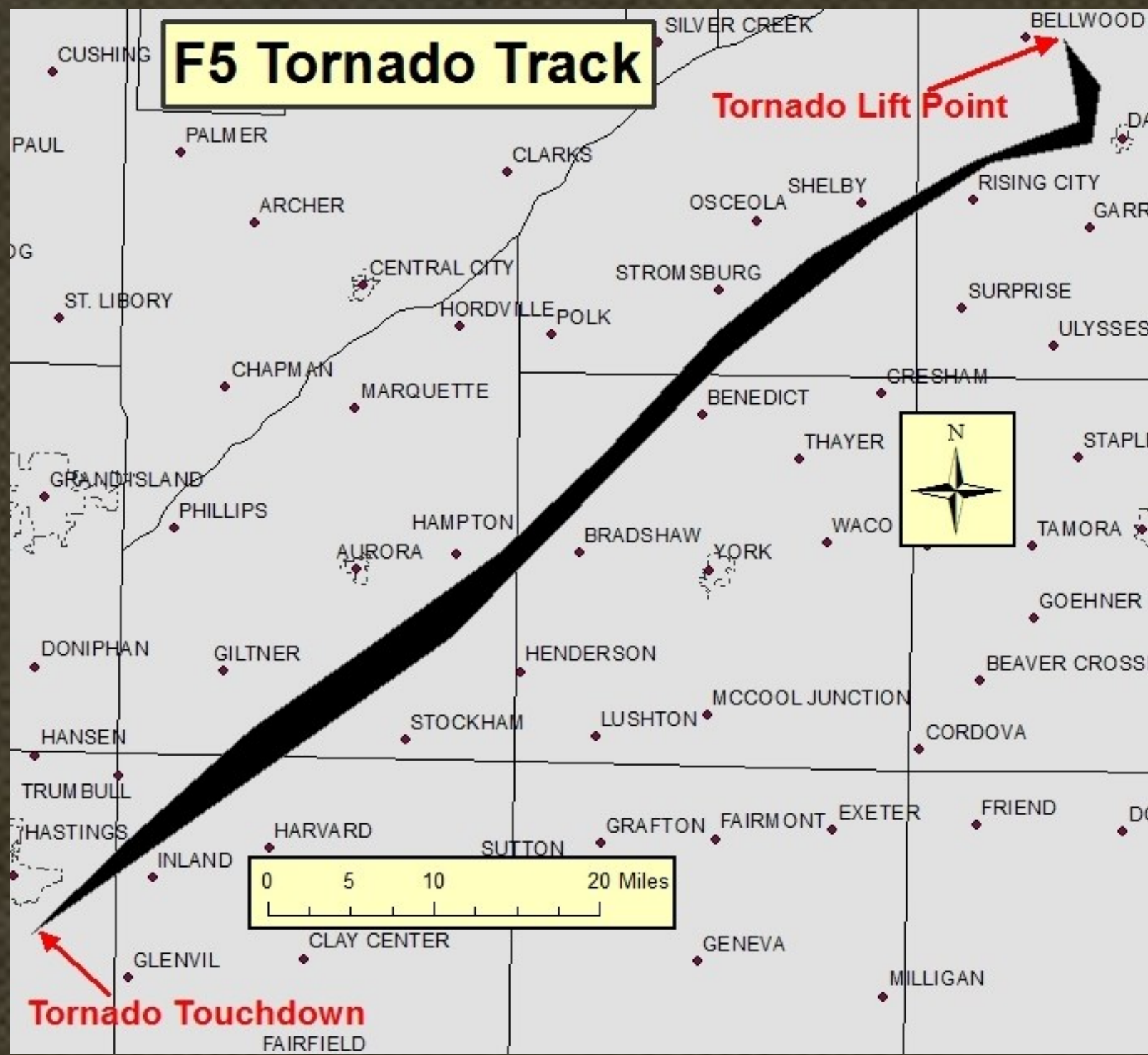


# Terrible Tuesday

## F5 Tornado Rips Through Central Nebraska

### May 5, 1964

For folks in central Nebraska, May 5th, 1964 started out like any other day, but by sunset would be a day of total destruction. During the afternoon, a line of severe thunderstorms developed and quickly pushed through the region. Along its path, the line spawned numerous tornadoes, including an F4 tornado that nearly destroyed the town of Wolbach. But the biggest was yet to come. By 5 p.m., the line dropped a tornado just southeast of Hastings which quickly developed into an F5 on the Fujita Scale, the largest possible. The tornado trekked nearly 70 miles to the northeast, devastating everything in its path. Two fatalities occurred that night, along with numerous injuries. Several farmsteads suffered extensive damage, some with no buildings left standing.



This map shows an approximate track of the tornado path as it swept northeast from its touchdown point in Adams County to near Bellwood in Butler County, where it lifted. This track was created by estimating the location of damage points as given by local newspapers covering the tornado at the time.

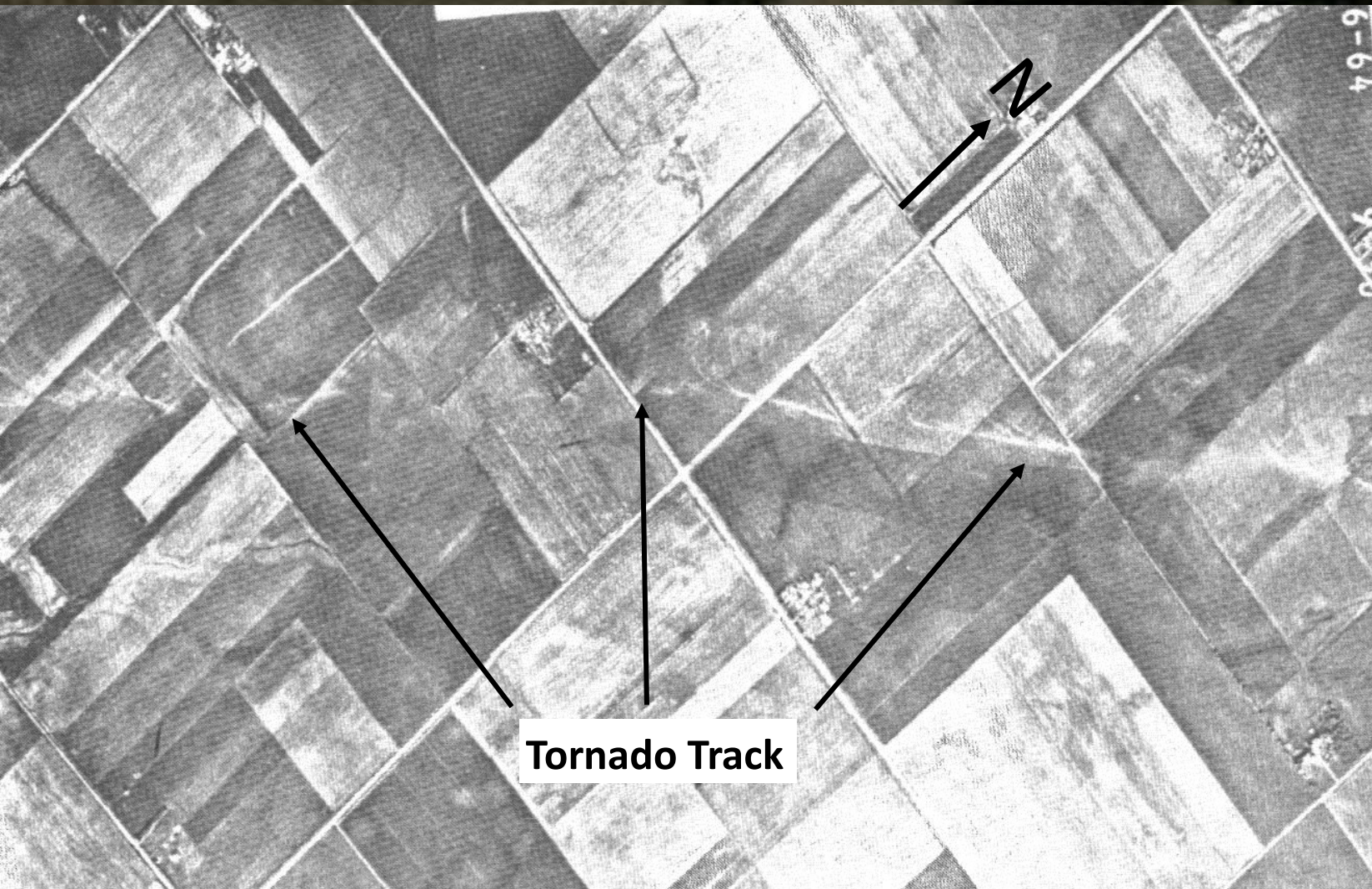
Right: Just days after the tornado, Park Aerial Surveys, Inc. took aerial photographs of the tornado track to the east and northeast of Shelby, Nebraska. Loops across the land leave a scar as a painful reminder of the twisters destruction. Photo credit to the Monthly Weather Review.

### Some Won't Rebuild

## Hamilton County Hit For \$3 Million Loss

Although the tornado swept through numerous counties, damage to the southeast portion of Hamilton County was by far the greatest. From south of Giltner near the Hamilton - Clay County line to east of Hampton near the Hamilton - York County line, nearly 3 million dollars in damage occurred. Over 42 farmsteads received damage, some with no buildings left standing, and over 100 livestock were killed in the path of this tornado.

Headline from Aurora News-Register.



Left: Located directly in the path of the storm, roughly 4 miles east of Hampton on Highway 34, this farm received extensive damage. Sadly, the owners Mr. Clessen Turner and his daughter Mrs. Theodore Reed were the two fatalities that day. Photo credit to the Aurora News-Register.

Right: The Hilmer Peters farm, located 1 ½ miles east of the Hamilton - York County line, was totally destroyed. Mr. and Mrs. Peters and family got in their car and left before the storm struck. Not a building was left standing. Photo credit to the Aurora News-Register.



Background: Irrigation pipe in the trees on the Walter Troester farm 5 miles southeast of Aurora. All buildings were destroyed. Photo credit to the Aurora News-Register.

### 3 Are Lucky to Be Living

#### Culvert Is a Refuge as Tornado Rages

By a World-Herald Staff Member.  
Bradshaw, Neb. — Tom Hehnke, 21, is a young man who is thankful to be alive today.

His two companions should feel the same way.

Tom and his companions were driving through a heavy, black cloud shortly after 6 p. m. Tuesday when they decided to pull into the ditch and dive into a culvert 2½ miles west of Bradshaw on Highway 2-34.

They were in the culvert when the tornado that ripped across this part of Nebraska passed overhead.

Fifty feet away, the cloud pulled up trees and demolished a house where Mrs. Theodore Reed, 60, and her father, Classen Turner, 84, resided.

#### Bodies Found

Mrs. Reed's body was found by the boys in a field 75 yards from where the house had stood. Mr. Turner's body was found by a corner of the foundation.

Mr. Hehnke was traveling from York to his home in Grand Island with Mel Wesels and Claude Walton, also of Grand Island.

"There wasn't any funnel —just one big black cloud," Mr. Hehnke said.

"I just slid into the ditch up here on the highway and we dove into a culvert."

What happened after that?

"You put 50 freight trains together, and that's what it sounded like," he said. "That's about as close as I ever want to describe another one, too."

#### 'No Suction'

He said that the three felt no suction in the culvert, "but we were packed in there pretty tight. It was just real windy."

They searched about 45 minutes for dead and injured persons in the area and then hitchhiked home," because we were wet and cold."

Mr. Hehnke returned to the scene Wednesday and found his 1963 model car demolished. The tornado had rolled and carried it about 75 yards.

Mr. and Mrs. Hilmer Peters and their three children also narrowly escaped injury or death. They lived one-quarter mile west of Mrs. Reed and Mr. Turner.

"I saw it coming when I walked out of the house, Mr. Peters said. He and his wife loaded their children into the car, drove several hundred yards down the road until a tree and telephone pole fell on the car, then waited out the storm there. Their house also was demolished.